

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of operating a communications device, the
2 method comprising:

3 accessing a voice message system;
4 retrieving, over a public telephone network, a voice message from the
5 voice message system;
6 generating a digital audio file representing said message; and
7 sending, using at least one ~~IP~~ Internet Protocol (IP) packet, the digital
8 audio file representing said message to a service subscriber.

1 Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein sending the digital audio file
2 includes sending an E-mail to the service subscriber with the generated audio file as a
3 file attachment to said E-mail.

1 Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the step of accessing a voice
2 message system includes the steps of:
3 contacting said voice message system by placing a call to said voice
4 message system; and
5 controlling said voice message system by transmitting at least one
6 DTMF signal to said system.

1 Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 3, wherein said at least one DTMF signal is
2 a password which is required to be supplied to said voice message system before
3 messages can be retrieved.

1 Claim 5 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving a reply to said ~~E-mail message~~ sending the digital audio file;
3 and

4 deleting the retrieved message from said voice message system in
5 response to receiving said reply.

1 Claim 6 (currently amended): A method of operating a communications device, the
2 method comprising:

3 accessing a voice message system;

4 retrieving, over a public telephone network, a voice message from the
5 voice message system;

6 generating a digital audio file representing said message;

7 ~~The communication method of claim 5, further comprising:~~

8 ~~prior to sending said E-mail message,~~ storing the retrieved voice
9 message in a memory device from which the service subscriber can retrieve messages
10 by telephone; and

11 sending, using at least one Internet Protocol (IP) packet, the digital
12 audio file representing said message to a service subscriber;

13 receiving a reply to said sending the digital audio file;

14 deleting the retrieved message from said voice message system in
15 response to receiving said reply; and

16 in response to receiving said reply, deleting the retrieved message
17 from the memory device.

1 Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2 receiving an E-mail message including a telephone number and an
3 audio file; and

4 initiating a telephone call using said telephone number.

1 Claim 8 (currently amended): A method of operating a communications device, the
2 method comprising:

3 accessing a voice message system;

4 retrieving, over a public telephone network, a voice message from the
5 voice message system;
6 generating a digital audio file representing said message;
7 sending, using at least one Internet Protocol (IP) packet, the digital
8 audio file representing said message to a service subscriber;
9 receiving an E-mail message including a telephone number and an
10 audio file;
11 initiating a telephone call using said telephone number;
12 ~~The method of claim 7, further comprising:~~
13 monitoring to detect a speech signal followed by a period of silence;
14 and
15 upon detecting said period of silence, playing the audio file.

1 Claim 9 (original): The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 storing a first prompt message; and
3 determining from subscriber input when the first prompt message should be
4 loaded onto said voice message system.

1 Claim 10 (currently amended): The method of claim 9, further comprising:
2 placing a call to said voice message system; and
3 loading said answering voice message system with the first prompt
4 message.

1 Claim 11 (original): The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of:
2 determining from subscriber input when a second prompt message
3 should be loaded onto said voice message system.

1 Claim 12 (original): The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of:
2 placing an additional call to said voice message system; and

3 loading the second prompt message into said voice message system.

1 Claim 13 (original): The method of claim 9, wherein the step of determining from
2 subscriber input when the first prompt message should be loaded includes the step of:
3 accessing a prompt message schedule generated from subscriber input.

1 Claim 14 (original): A method of controlling a voice message system, comprising:
2 receiving an E-mail message indicating that a voice message retrieved
3 from said voice message system and forwarded to a service subscriber was reviewed;
4 in response to receiving said E-mail message, accessing said voice
5 message system; and
6 controlling said voice message system to delete said retrieved voice
7 message.

1 Claim 15 (original): The method of claim 14, wherein the step of accessing said
2 voice message system includes:
3 placing a telephone call to said voice message system over a telephone
4 network; and
5 sending a control signal to said voice message system over said
6 telephone network causing said retrieved voice message to be deleted from said voice
7 message system.

1 Claim 16 (original): The method of claim 15, wherein a voice message retrieval and
2 forwarding device is used to place said call and to send said control signal, the
3 method further comprising the step of:
4 in response to receiving said E-mail message, operating the voice
5 message retrieval and forwarding device to delete a copy of the retrieved voice
6 message from a storage device included in the voice message retrieval and forwarding
7 device.

1 Claim 17 (currently amended): A method of controlling a voice message system,

2 comprising:

3 receiving an E-mail message indicating that a voice message retrieved
4 from said voice message system and forwarded to a service subscriber was reviewed;

5 ~~The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of:~~

6 operating a subscriber computer system to automatically generate said
7 E-mail message when a user of the subscriber computer system accesses an E-mail
8 message which includes said retrieved message as an attached audio file;

9 in response to receiving said automatically generated E-mail message,

10 accessing said voice message system by placing a telephone call to said voice
11 message system over a telephone network; and

12 _____ sending a control signal to said voice message system over said
13 telephone network causing said retrieved voice message to be deleted from said voice
14 message system.

1 Claims 18-23 (canceled)

1 Claim 24 (original): A communication device, comprising:

2 means for accessing a voice message system;

3 means for retrieving a voice message from the voice message system
4 over a public telephone network;

5 means for generating an E-mail message including the retrieved voice
6 message as an attached audio file; and

7 means for sending the E-mail message to a service subscriber.

1 Claim 25 (original): A device for controlling a voice message system, comprising:

2 means for receiving an E-mail message indicating that a voice message
3 retrieved from said voice message system and forwarded to a service subscriber was
4 reviewed;

5 means for accessing said voice message system in response to
6 receiving said E-mail message; and
7 means for controlling said voice message system to delete said
8 retrieved voice message.

1 Claims 26-28 (canceled)

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1 Claim 29 (original): A method of operating a communications device coupled to a
2 plurality of voice messaging systems, which are physically distinct units from said
3 communications device, and to a computer system corresponding to a user of the
4 communications device, the method comprising the steps of:

5 accessing the plurality of voice message systems corresponding to the
6 user;

7 retrieving voice messages from at least some of the plurality of voice
8 message systems; and

9 forwarding the retrieved voice messages to said computer system
10 using at least one IP packet per message.

1 Claim 30 (original): The method of claim 29, wherein the step of forwarding the
2 retrieved messages includes:

3 generating at least one digital file including audio data; and

4 transmitting said digital file to said computer system.

1 Claim 31 (original): The method of claim 30, wherein transmitting said digital file to
2 said computer system includes:

3 sending said digital file as an attachment to an E-mail.

1 Claim 32 (original): The method of claim 30, wherein said plurality of voice message
2 systems includes a first voice message system located at a first premises and a second

3 voice message system located at a second premises which is physically remote from
4 said first premises.

1 Claim 33 (original): The method of claim 32, wherein the step of accessing the
2 plurality of remote voice message systems includes:

3 initiating a telephone call to the first voice message system.

1 Claim 34 (original): The method of claim 32, wherein the step of accessing the
2 plurality of remote voice message systems includes:

3 establishing a digital communication channel between said
4 communications device and the second voice message system; and
5 sending at least one IP packet to said second voice message system to
6 control said second voice message system.

1 Claim 35 (original): The method of claim 34, wherein the step of accessing the
2 plurality of remote voice message systems further includes:

3 initiating a telephone call to the first voice message system.